



Eastern Gateway: Arts & Entertainment (12th Street to Bladensburg Avenue)

Introduction

Building on the success of the H Street Playhouse, the presence of the R. L. Christian Library, plans for the Atlas Theater's rebirth, and the area's historic buildings, the Plan envisions the eastern end of the corridor developing as destination for restaurants, cafes, galleries, small shops, and studio spaces serving the needs of theatergoers, the District arts community, and neighborhood residents. Extending from 12th Street to Bladensburg Road, this area will act as a magnet for arts and entertainment-related investments and a catalyst for the celebration of local heritage and culture. Improved library facilities are expected to play an important role in the area's future—a new facility or greatly improved facility could provide a civic presence and an important educational and cultural anchor for neighborhood residents, especially children. The plan also calls for the redesign of the intersection of H and 15th Streets with Florida, Maryland, Bladensburg, and Benning Avenues to improve conditions for pedestrians, calm traffic, and create a new space for a memorial or public art.

This area, in combination with the Central Retail District, will further improve the street's image as a unique and interesting destination. Recommendations for this area include initiatives to attract new investment, encourage the renovation of storefronts and buildings, attract small office and apartment uses in upper story spaces, encourage infill development on vacant and underused sites, and increase the availability of parking.

Development Program

The Plan estimates the eastern Gateway can support, over the next 10 years, the following:

- 15,000 – 40,000 square feet of retail uses;
- 100,000 square feet (or 100 units) of housing; and
- 50,000 square feet of office space.

Accommodating these uses and maximizing the development potential of vacant and underutilized sites will result in the removal of approximately 40,000 square feet of building area and the addition of 170,000 square feet for a

total building area of 420,000 square feet. Development in this area will result in the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of buildings and redevelopment resulting in the replacement of several single story buildings with new 3-4 story buildings. The Plan also calls for the development of municipal parking to serve this area and the Central Retail District.

This development program for retail use is built on the assumption that the Atlas Theater, along with the already thriving H Street Playhouse, will become strong arts and entertainment magnets and spark demand for restaurants and neighborhood cafes.

This area in combination with the focused Centralized Retail District would further support the street's image creation as a unique and interesting place to investigate and patronize. The success of this district could result in an expanded trade area, which would translate into healthier H Street retail establishments.



Recommendations

Auto Zone Redevelopment (A). The Plan identified the Auto Zone site as an appropriate location for the development of a 3-4 level parking structure with ground floor retail fronting H Street and 12th Streets. The current condition of the site does not contribute to the pedestrian character of H Street. The buildings blank walls and auto-centric parking configuration make this site a good example of what not to repeat. The redevelopment of the parcel could provide an opportunity for structured parking in a location that provides support for the theater projects and potential restaurant spin-offs.

R. L Christian Library Site (B). The District recently initiated a process to evaluate R. L Christian Library's programs and

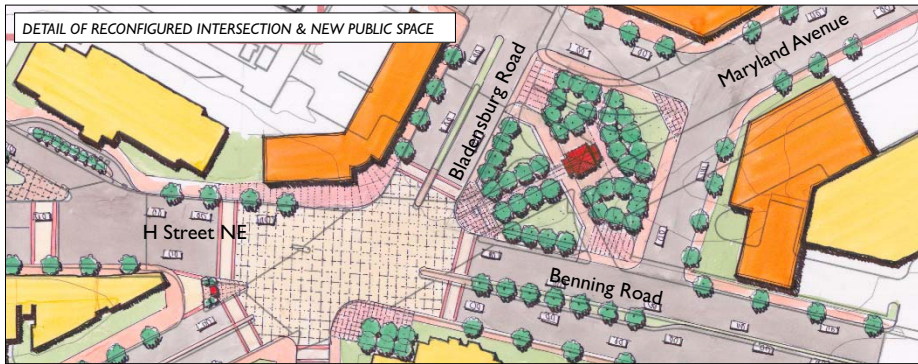
facilities and determine alternatives for providing better services to the community. The process will result in recommendations for improvements to the existing facility, replacement of the facility on the existing site, or relocation of the library to a new building or renovated building. The Plan fully recognizes the library's important role in the neighborhood's future and strongly supports its continued presence in the center or eastern end of the corridor.

Short term improvements to the site could include the development of a small (15-20 space) public parking lot behind the library, with appropriate lighting, screening, and landscaping. In the long term, the site could accommodate a new library or a mixed use development with ground floor retail and residences in upper story spaces. Should the

library relocate, surface parking on the whole site may be considered an appropriate interim use.

(This library site, along with the adjacent property, also was considered a candidate for a new parking structure but its size and configuration will accommodate only a very inefficient facility. Inclusion of the church property would be required for this site to better support structured parking.)

Rehabilitation of the Atlas Theater and Support for Investments in the Arts (C). The development strategy for this end of the corridor heavily depends on the success of the Atlas Theater, H Street Playhouse, and any future arts and entertainment uses. The success of these entities will provide at least three benefits:



- an opportunity to restore an active arts and heritage component to the neighborhood;
- more opportunities for high quality restaurants; and
- a more active and vibrant community, especially after working hours, indirectly helping to make the street more safe

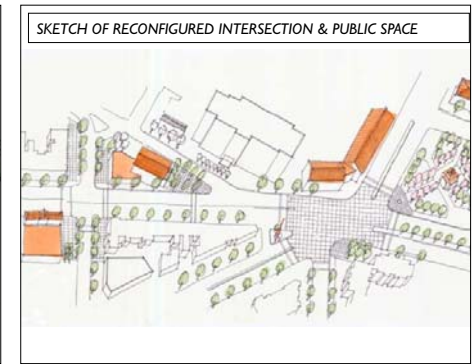
Mid-Block Municipal Parking—Mid-Block of the 1300 Block South Side (D). As arts and entertainment venues primarily are evening destinations and most patrons will tend to drive to events rather than walk or take transit, parking is an important consideration. In addition to the proposed parking structure on the Auto Zone site and the small surface lot behind the library, the interior of the 1300 Block was analyzed as a potential site for the development of a new surface parking lot. Assuming redevelopment of all the



interior parcels, the area can accommodate a 100-110 space surface lot. Should full redevelopment not be possible, a lot with fewer spaces would still provide needed space.

Civic Space at 14th Street and Florida Avenue (E). The triangle between 14th Street and Florida and Maryland Avenues may provide an opportunity for the assembly of land and the building of a small community building. Otherwise, rehabilitation of the existing buildings is recommended.

New Civic Space/Reconfigured Intersection—Eastern End of H Street (F). The Plan recommends that a detailed design and traffic study be conducted for the intersection of H Street with Benning Road and Maryland, Florida, and Bladensburg Avenues. The intersection of the 6



major roadways at the eastern end of the district can be reconfigured to create a new civic space as well as improve conditions for pedestrians and drivers. The study should explore opportunities to:

- improve conditions for pedestrians with special paving, clearly marked crosswalks, and pedestrian islands offering safe havens;
- create a new public space consistent with the recommendations of NCPC's Monuments and Memorials Plan (and suggested indirectly in L'Enfant's plan for Washington, DC); and
- provide for better circulation of vehicular traffic.